

East Jemez Resources Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes – August 28, 2003

Welcome and Introductions – John Mack

John Mack opened the East Jemez Resource Council (Council). Thanks were given to Todd Haagenstad for his efforts in organizing the Council's minutes, charter, and agenda. New members were welcomed and a round-table introduction was conducted before reviewing the meeting agenda. It was mentioned Todd would have to leave after break and a call was made to address any items in which his presence was necessary.

EJRC Administrative Goals and Updates – All

John Mack lead the discussion by stating there were two goals he envisioned EJRC accomplishing this year:

- 1) White paper sessions, which would be helpful for addressing “hot” topics and distributing information to members and via the web site. John thanked Sam for offering the first white paper session and mentioned that other “champions” will be contacted to get additional white papers done.
- 2) To get signatories for the ERJC Charter

NOTE: John asked the minutes to reflect that the Council should strive to have all signatures of those who want to participate by the November meeting of EJRC.

Todd reminded attendees that there was only one more quarterly meeting left this year and it was time to consider a new chair. Todd then passed around a handout depicting the preliminary workings of the EJRC website available via the RRES Division web site. Todd discussed that the site will have links to other agencies, a place for white papers and other topics/events, and the EJRC Charter and minutes. He mentioned the site should be simple and easy to maintain with the real goal being to facilitate communication. Jackie stated she easily found the site by searching www.google.com for “Eastern Jemez Resource Council.” Todd rounded out the discussion by encouraging attendees to provide feedback about how ERJC would like to interact in this sort of venue to which John Mack questioned whether this could be incorporated into the charter and sought opinions.

Tony Delfin, State Forestry Department, asked for clarification about the State Forestry Department's role as participant versus member. As stated in previous EJRC meetings, attendees in general felt that land management agencies should be listed as signatories, but that agencies did not need to be signatories in order to participate – it was an independent decision by each agency. Todd welcomed off-line conversation on the subject. John mentioned these issues are an important part of the Charter and are key to the future direction of the EJRC. John reiterated that participants have stated they didn't want EJRC to become a political entity but prefer it function primarily as an organization for facilitating regional communication and information dissemination.

When asked for additional opinions, Steve Anderson agreed it was important to get the Charter signed and that entities have the flexibility to be either members or participants. However, having a signed Charter gets agencies to commit [at upper management levels] and will legitimize the Council's efforts. Steve also noted that although the Eastern Jemez is a “discrete block of real-estate”, topics often apply to other issues around the state. Commitment of agencies also ensures

some internal resources are committed. Steve concluded by stating that the more we can keep cooperation going, the easier it is to gather information rather than working over the phone. Todd concurred stating that was the reason the Council was formed ~7 years ago.

John reminded people that the charter was set up to go on for 5 years and though we cannot predict what will become important, the intention was to get a commitment. Jackie stated that to her, the heart of EJRC is summarized in “Article II – Statement of Work” of the charter (see handout):

“[The Council is] a problem-solving group of natural and cultural resource professionals [who] will communicate often enough and in such a manner as to develop understanding and respect for individual, tribal, and/or agency needs, [and] will provide consistency, where feasible, in research on management of natural and cultural resources [so that] our efforts will result in better management of the resources.”

Jackie envisioned EJRC as an avenue for putting potential conflicts on the table and then working within agencies to get them resolved. Steve agreed that EJRC is a way to resolve issues before they escalate. John summarized these thoughts by stating that the Council used to share information and gather perspectives/interests from agencies that had conflicts. It served as an early warning system so nobody got blindsided. Todd mentioned that there has been a significant turnover in membership/participation and that he and John would like to get out and get signatures to ensure the Charter is current and representative.

A question was raised regarding which State Bureaus are currently members. The list of State signatories include the following: NM Environment Department, NM Game and Fish (NMGF), NM State Historic Preservation Office, University of New Mexico, and the NM State Minerals Department. Todd clarified the distinction between participants and members. Council members typically have land management authority and jurisdiction. In contrast, Council participants may include entities that have an interest in regional resources management including regulators and stakeholders.

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MaryAnn, NM Environment Department, contributed by saying that she was not participating as a regulator, but did have an influence through policies that could affect land management. She submitted an example to attendees of the priorities for the 319 funds. They need input to make decisions about the Jemez and Upper Pajarito Watersheds. Therefore, they need to be at the table not as a regulator, but to see how policies will affect others. John said this was the early warning system he envisioned. He then directed people to the “Article II” handout again and pointed out #1, which described the Councils’ goals and expectations, and #4, which addresses membership. Sam also noted the importance of #8, which implies EJRC is a non-political entity. Todd reminded attendees that at the February meeting there was significant discussion about the Council reviewing strategies and providing endorsement on issues, but everyone wanted to step back from that because it would be interpreted as political. John added that the decision was universal that it would destroy the Council if it acted as an endorser. He also mentioned that items #8 and #9 are what started the white papers as a source of providing information. It was clarified that the web site made clear that the posted white papers were not the position of the Council. John concluded this session by reminding everyone to let their leadership know that he and Todd would be coming around to visit about the charter and bring some conclusion to it.

Introduction of Ecology Group Leader – Jackie Little

Before introducing herself Jackie asked Todd to do a brief review of his proposed research. Todd told the Council he is working on a Masters degree in Natural Resource Environmental Planning. He is currently talking to others about producing a proclamation on the White Rock Canyon Preserve east-southeast of LANL. There is discussion about establishing a wildlife preserve and putting forth agency agreements. The Department of Energy will own the site, but NPS will manage it. Todd said he was leaving the meeting early to meet with his committee about the proposal. He wants to step up under the agreement to figure out how to manage that parcel of land with its diverse stakeholders. The dynamic cultural resources of San Ildefonso and others have been recognized in agreements and he sees it as an opportunity to use it as a project/thesis. He also looks forward to using EJRC as a gate for ideas. John then stated that within the agreement it says a management plan must be established by 2005 for that parcel and that Todd's timing is fortuitous because it has to get done anyway. When asked about the "footprint" of the parcel, Todd described it as remote and isolate stretching from the rimrock down to the Rio Grande and Bandelier to Pajarito acres.

Following the break, Jackie introduced herself. She reiterated that it was important that EJRC not be political and remains technically focused. She said that was what she was comfortable with as well. She then described her background as being in botany and forest ecology. She started in the 1970's days of NEPA when GIS was still cell-based (before GRASS). She did some wetland (Corps of engineers) compliance work as well. She stated she has been here with the Ecology group for roughly 2 months after coming from Oak Ridge. She has worked with all federal agencies, but New Mexico is new for her. Working with the State agencies and the Pueblos is a total unknown for her. She has a cabin in the Jemez and is taking bets whether she will make it through the winter. She welcomed anyone to call her any time if they needed help making the appropriate contacts at the lab because she does not like to see problems escalate.

White Paper Presentation; Beetle Mortality – Sam Loftin

Sam distributed a brief white paper for internal use on bark beetle mortality. Most of the information was readily available from web sites and the back of the handout provided links to many of those sites. Sam mentioned the handout had little natural history information, but rather strived to provide information on impacts and future considerations. He reviewed the figures and mentioned that this year's State Forestry survey, which will more extensively include pinyon-juniper stands, is due out in October. Sam further concluded that most of the infestation is driven by climatic factors and that the seasonal drought outlook predicts an average fall/winter moisture regime over the next few months. However, the models are not very reliable given these conditions and the best we can say is that New Mexico is in a drought with some improvement. Even with good winter precipitation, there will likely be ~2 year lag before the trees can resist bark beetle attack. John Mack mentioned that Bandelier is experiencing about ~10% of normal precipitation this year and that the smaller trees that survived last year appear to be dying.

Steve Anderson asked if anyone knew what was happening to juniper trees in the region between Los Pinos and San Juan that also appeared to be dying from some sort of insect infestation. Sam could not answer, but stated he would check with Terry Rogers – the entomologist from the Forest Service Regional Office. When asked, Tony Delfin stated a survey will be conducted in the next couple of weeks, but he is not sure if tribal lands will be mapped in their entirety. Neil Weber added to the conversation by stating that BIA does not map. John Mack encouraged anyone with

information about web sites to funnel the information to Sam. Dave mentioned the group in Flagstaff at Northern Arizona University that had met with Randy Balice.

The conversation shifted to re-establishment of forbs and grasses due to the opening of the canopy following bark beetle mortality. Danny voiced his concern over exaggerated short-term sediment delivery and contaminant transport. He used the example of cut-and-fill cycles in arroyos before grasses and forbs establish and that our typical monsoon season could be sediment-prone for the next couple of years. Before moving forward in the agenda, Jackie asked if there was increased risk of fire with the dead trees. Sam said not necessarily to which John added that his fire folks explained the trees actually fill with pitch to keep the needles on and that fire risk could actually go down. There was ongoing discussion about the skeleton of the trees acting as cover for vegetative establishment and that, though some people are cutting down the dead trees for aesthetics, it could actually make the situation worse. However, Sam stated that when the trees are thinned and used for mulch, erosion may be reduced but seedling establishment may be higher. As a result, high tree densities in 10-20 years may create a worse situation than in the beginning.

John thanked Sam for his white paper presentation and stated there is no reason the Council can't make the white papers "living documents" that continually evolve.

Cultural Resources Working Group Update – Rory Gauthier

John stated the Cultural Resources Working Group was scheduled to meet next week and that Rory would forward the minutes to Todd to include with the EJRC minutes (see attached).

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership Update – Maryann McGraw

Maryann said the group has been extremely active this summer. There has been a push to get the County on board with storm water management now that there is less distraction from Cerro Grande issues. Maryann spoke about some of the recent speakers they have had at meetings. She then moved on to talk about the recent NPDES ruling stating that communities with 10,000+ people should have storm water plans, but Los Alamos falls outside these regulations because the population is too dispersed. However, the EPA may make an exception and include Los Alamos because of the potential for contaminants in arroyos. The County Council has agreed to allow them to apply for funding to develop a storm water ordinance and develop a countywide plan that would allow them to manage developers.

The group is also looking into outreach issues regarding gray water and storm water reuse, which would be funded through the 319 Grant. If that doesn't work, they may try to go through the Clean Water Act (Sect. 106). Kyle Zimmerman will take the lead. Maryann also mentioned that the 319 Request for Proposals still has not come out and they are waiting to see if the Pajarito Watershed will be on the priority list. The 2001 Plan will be updated with the assistance of the EPA.

Future workshops are also on the agenda and may include topics such as West Nile, restoration activities with the Forest Service, field trips to homes, and the Stump Dump at Quemazon Canyon. Meetings were not being advertised well, so dates for the next three meetings have already been established. Meetings will be the second Tuesday of each month (Sept. 9th, Oct. 14th, Nov. 11th) from 3-5 pm at the County Annex conference room.

New chairpersons have also been named to the PPWP. Kristen Dors and June Fabryka-Martin will serve as co-chairs after Barbara Hodechek stepped down.

In conclusion to the update, Danny said that monitoring was done in Pueblo Canyon last year and that LANL/ER found that the town site-derived flooding did not originate from the burned area. He stressed this was an important finding and that they are currently working on a multi-faceted approach to manage sediment transport in Pueblo Canyon. He also stated that Acid Canyon management was important for the town site and that we need to attack as many fronts as possible. He was excited the county was involved and interested.

Round Table Updates and Discussions – All

US Forest Service – Espanola Ranger District (Mary Orr) – Mary notified the group that Gilbert Zepeda has replaced Leonard Atencio as the Forest Supervisor. She is not sure when Gilbert will start serving on the VCNP Board as Leonard has requested continued participation for a while. In other news, Mary said they have been without a Fire Management Officer following Kevin Joseph's departure last year, but they should have a new one within a week. Greg Kuyumjian is also at the end of his 3-year BAER position. The Molina Fire was a "political nightmare" according to Mary and they are now focusing on rehabilitation efforts. A new Law Enforcement Officer – Terry Olson – has been hired (not to be confused with Dusty Olson at the VCNP).

NM State Forestry Dept. (Tony Delfin) – Tony started by stating he has been in his job about 2 months. The Forestry Department currently has \$100,000 for the Greater Jemez Defensible Space Projects. They are also working with NMGF at Fenton Lake on a thinning project (~\$75,000). They plan to have a Hazard Assessment for Sandoval County by December.

Pueblo of San Ildefonso (Neil Weber) – Neil said they are still working on the land transfer from BLM to San Ildefonso and Santa Clara. He clarified that there was a one-year deadline, but there are ongoing political issues with Forest Service and L.A. County to release claims to the entire aboriginal area. The Pueblo is also currently developing water-quality standards that will go to tribal council before public release. Maryann stated the PPWP would be interested in that when it comes out.

New Mexico Game and Fish (Steve Anderson) – Steve talked a little about the new Director – Bruce Thompson – who took office last spring. He said Bruce Thompson has a long resume and came to the department from the Cooperative Research Unit at New Mexico State University. In addition, the department is currently hiring a Deputy Director and Assistant Director.

Steve then talked a bit about 2 new recovery plans they have been working on, which were mandated by law. The plan for the Banded Kingsnake is almost done while the other will refer to roughly a dozen species. Jackie asked if there was a Heritage Program in the state and Steve said a link existed through the NMGF website under the Conservation Services Division. Steve also mentioned that the State Wildlife Conservation Act requires lists to be updated every two years and that it will be late next summer before the latest list is out.

Steve then focused his update on work related to the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout and its reintroduction. He credited the collaborative work between USFS and NMGF for keeping the trout from being listed as a candidate species. Mary added that the USFS Fisheries Biologist has also been busy and that they are working with the VCNP to reintroduce cutthroats. The Council then

discussed some of the problems related to stream barriers, hybridization, contamination, disease, and predation by Brown Trout.

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership (Maryann McGraw) – Maryann kept her remarks brief following her complete update earlier. She mentioned the 319 Request for Proposals was supposed to be out in July and they had lost the 319 Program Manager. They also had a new bureau chief. She encouraged the participation of ERJC as the PPWP worked to establish their priorities.

Bandelier National Monument (John Mack)- before beginning his update, John wanted to let the Council know that Jason Garcia from Santa Clara apologized for not attending, but asked that Todd and John bring up the topic of returning ancestral lands. It was noted this had already been discussed earlier that morning.

Within NPS, John said their superintendent – Steve Bone – had retired and the new superintendent – Darlene Koontz from Grant-Coors Ranch in Park Lodge – was scheduled to arrive the last week of September. In addition, a public scoping open house had been held on August 27th to discuss the Fire Management Plan. No one showed up to the meeting held in Santa Fe on August 26th. The next meeting was to be that evening from 6:30 – 9:00 in Albuquerque. Maryann made a later statement that Gedi Cibas should be on the distribution list for scoping issues so that it will get circulated through the entire Environment Department.

In other news, they were continuing with work on the Ecological Restoration EIS following low participation in the public scoping meetings held in June. John concluded his update by discussing the Bandelier closure area on the Valle, which had been closed since 1976 due to trespass issues brought forth by the former owners of Baca Land and Cattle Company. There is increasing demand to re-open it because there are no longer public/private issues following the purchase of the VCNP. Bandelier is required by law to decide what to do with lands acquired.

John concluded the meeting by asking for additional comments. He proposed the next meeting date to be November 13, 2003, from 9:00 – 12:00. He would forward agenda topics to Todd to distribute along with the minutes about one month in advance.